

Opening Day Speech

Ron Richard, Speaker of the House

Welcome Representatives and guests to the opening of the second session of the 95th General Assembly.

Today we stand at the precipice of the future. Immense uncertainty faces all of us. We are at time in Missouri history where few have been. Let us work together as never before- times demand it.

We must never forget we sit in the people's chamber and our sacred duty as their elected officials is the maintenance of the integrity and sanctity of the Missouri House of Representatives. We are here to make our state a better place for our citizens to work and live.

With every vote we take, we must never forget the trust Missouri has put in us. We, as members, expect nothing less than the highest integrity in this chamber and the people of the state deserve nothing less.

Many members have filed legislation that would reform ethical standards. Today, I will create a Special Standing Committee on Government Accountability and Ethics Reform.

I am appointing members of outstanding character to this committee; Representative Kevin Wilson and Representative Sally Faith have agreed to serve as Chair and Vice-Chair. The committee also includes: Representatives Bruns, Lipke, Day, Nolte, Brandom, Burnett, Witte, Morris, Walsh and Curls. Their task is simple; I will send all ethics reform legislation to their committee so they may create one, bi-partisan piece of legislation that will restore the public's trust in our Chamber by seeking to remove even the appearance of impropriety.

Regardless of party affiliation we can all agree that the sanctity of this body is important. From this point forward, we commit ourselves to gain and hold the faith that the people of Missouri have in their elected Representatives.

We are also here because we believe in forging a bright future for Missouri, which is first and foremost in our minds when we walk into this chamber each day.

Economic woes threaten to dampen our future. The economic downturn has left no community or household in Missouri untouched. 9.5% percent of Missourians are out of work, and the House of Representatives must continue to lead the way, as we have in the past, towards a complete economic revitalization of Missouri.

There are those who say that the economic recovery will not be tied to job growth. That is unacceptable in Missouri.

We must also work to protect the tools that have been successful at bringing jobs and businesses into our state. This year we must also continue our work helping small businesses. They are the economic engine of Missouri.

The economic recovery of this state and nation will not be carried on the backs of government, but will instead be led by the forces of personal initiative and the free market. Missouri citizens will bring our state to a new level of economic prosperity through hard work; it is our duty to set the framework that allows them to thrive.

One important precept of our state government is that we must spend within our means and we cannot run budget deficits like the federal government. In a time of economic uncertainty we must work together to make the necessary decisions for our citizen's future that will allow Missouri to grow.

I will commit to you one thing: we must NOT and we will NOT raise taxes on working Missourians.

Families across the state are finding ways to stretch their dollars and we will work to follow them. With an ever increasing financial burden being placed on Missourians by the actions of the federal government, we must do what we can to decrease and cut taxes in Missouri.

Fiscal discipline and prudence will become the bywords for this session. The people demand nothing less with their tax dollars, and we will give them nothing less. We will commit ourselves to being prudent fiscal managers of public monies.

Our House is composed of responsible, hard-working members, and I know this will be a productive session that all Missourians can be proud of.

To all members, let us remember we are all here representing the people of our great state, and we all share the same common goal for a strong and confident Missouri that is a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

May God bless you and may God bless the great state of Missouri.